



2024 Annual Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction from Executive Director | 3 |
| Letter from the President | 4 |
| Professional Development & Conference Management..... | 5 |
| Letter from the AKF Editor..... | 6 |
| Bowling for Rhinos Giving | 7 |
| Thank You Chapters | 8 |
| Annual Contribution to AAZK..... | 9 |
| Financials | 10 |
| Membership, Board & Staff..... | 11 |



Letter from the Executive Director

We are pleased to present the AAZK Annual Report for the 2024 calendar year, highlighting the achievements and impact of our dedicated members and Chapters across the United States and Canada.

With over 100 active Chapters, AAZK has continued to thrive through a wide range of fundraising events, professional networking opportunities, and creative initiatives that brought attention to vital animal care and conservation causes. These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our local Chapter leaders and members, who balance their responsibilities at their home institutions while also contributing meaningfully to AAZK's mission.

Our community of nearly 2,000 members shares a commitment to advancing animal care, research, and public awareness. Through their efforts, we continue to support the professional development of animal care professionals and strengthen the connection between humans and the animals we serve.

We hope you love our new logo, branding and apparel! Thanks to the board, committee chairs and volunteers who participated in the process!

With sincere appreciation,

Scott Soldat-Valenzuela



Letter from the President

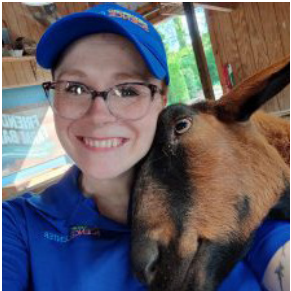
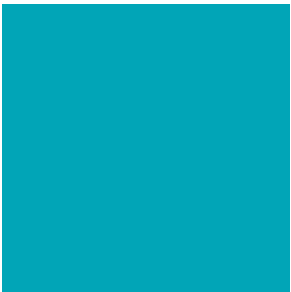
What a year it's been! With the wonderfully generous support from their Host Facility, The Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, the Omaha Chapter put on an amazing Conference in 2024. The Conference not only showcased the Omaha Chapter's stellar teamwork abilities, but also how important the Zoo and its Staff are to the surrounding communities.

Another exciting success for AAZK was the official roll out of the re-branding project. The AAZK Board of Directors, Staff, and a number of our Committee and Program Managers sat down with Knoodle Advertising to discuss what AAZK means to us and our vision for the future. The resounding theme of our discussion was that we all wanted to protect the original vision and history of AAZK, but we knew that it was time for a change. The end results brought a fresh new look to our logo and a brand new website design. While the AAZK name didn't change, the new look helps us to emphasize that we are more than just zookeepers. We are Animal Care Professionals and AAZK seeks to offer resources to all of the varying specialties in the field.

It has been my honor to be at the helm of AAZK during this transition. I truly appreciate all of the passion and excitement that the AAZK Membership has, and I look forward to being a part of AAZK's continued growth in the future.

Best Wishes,

Nicole Pepo



Professional Development & Conference Management

The 49th annual AAZK National Conference was hosted by the AAZK Omaha Chapter. The icebreaker event was an amazing networking experience for delegates and the staff of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, and the Omaha Zoo Foundation. The surprise guest was Joel Sartore, National Geographic photographer and speaker.

To open the conference, award-winning scholar and practitioner, Dr. Helen Fagan shared inspirational messages about leadership, diversity, and inclusion. The annual AZA/AAZK panel discussion titled "Keepers are Key: Elevating Animal Welfare/Well Being through Assessments, Research, and Animal Management Practices" featured engaging speakers from both AZA and AAZK. The conference program also featured conservation partner updates as well as papers, posters and workshops. Delegates had the opportunity to participate in one of three, 12-hour Professional Certificate Courses in sustainability, life support systems, and unique animal husbandry and training.

The professional Awards Ceremony, one of the evening events that takes place annually during the conference, celebrates the work of our partners, Chapters and individual members through recognition with grants and awards. We also honored two of our members who we lost in 2024 with special recognition during the ceremony.

The AAZK Omaha Chapter members and conference committee paid special attention to all the details of planning a conference and were excellent hosts for a week of networking and professional development. We even got to kick up our heels during the western-themed closing banquet.

Bethany Bingham

AAZK Director Professional Development & Conference Management

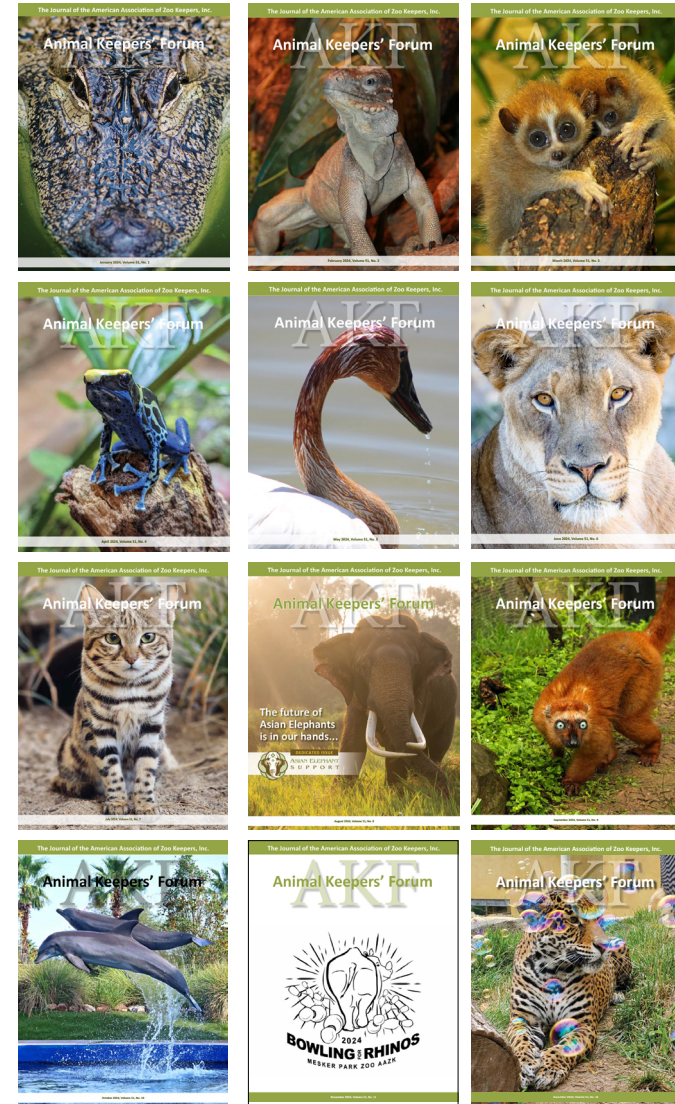
Letter from the *Animal Keepers' Forum* Editor

The *Animal Keepers' Forum* continues to be the main communication tool for members, conservation partners and advertisers. The monthly journal shares quality articles submitted by our members and partners through Featured Articles, and regular columns such as Training Tales, Enrichment Options and Conservation Station. In 2024, we were excited to offer two specially-themed issues of the AKF. The August issue was sponsored by the non-profit Asian Elephant Support, and highlighted the important conservation efforts to secure a sustainable future for Asian elephants. The November issue highlighted Bowling for Rhinos, the flagship conservation project of AAZK.

The AKF highlights best practices and innovations in animal care, conservation success stories, plus training and enrichment ideas. Animal care professionals learn and continually improve from experiences shared by their colleagues, and we are always interested in hearing from you. Encourage colleagues who deserve recognition for their great work to write an article. If you have comments for the Editor or would like to submit an article or cover photo—please e-mail Shane.Good@aazk.org

Shane Good
AKF Editor

- » **Shane Good, Editor, shane.good@aazk.org**
- » Elizabeth Tighe, Graphic Designer
- » Enrichment Options Column Coordinators: Ana Frace, Stephanie Chandler, Beth Stark-Posta, Beth Ament-Briggs
- » Training Tales Column Coordinators: Kim Kezer, Jay Pratte, Angela Binney
- » Conservation Station Column Coordinator: Erica Royer
- » Animal Welfare Column Coordinators: Ana Frace, Stephanie Chandler, Beth Stark-Posta, Beth Ament-Briggs



Bowing For Rhinos Giving

Sondaicus \$50,000 and Up

Sumatrensis \$15,000 to \$49,999

Los Angeles Chapter
Indianapolis Chapter
Oklahoma City Chapter
Lincoln Park

Unicornis \$5,000 – \$14,999

Mesker Park Zoo Chapter
Jacksonville Chapter
Point Defiance Chapter
Potter Park Zoo Chapter
Fort Worth Chapter
Dallas Chapter
Portland Chapter
Milwaukee Chapter
Glass City Chapter
Georgia Chapter
Greater Cleveland Chapter

Bicornis \$1000 – \$4999

Tucson Chapter
Little Turtle Chapter
Nashville Chapter
Tidewater Chapter
Potawatomi Chapter
Battle Creek Chapter
Columbus Chapter
Riverbanks Zoo and Garden Chapter
Roger Williams Park Zoo Chapter
Georgia Chapter
Ozarks Chapter
Badger Chapter
Greater Kansas Chapter
Rocky Mountain Chapter
Greater Houston Chapter

New Orleans Chapter
Greater Baltimore Chapter
Brevard American Chapter
Toronto Zoo Chapter
Baton Rouge Zoo Chapter
Cape May County Zoo Chapter
Phoenix Chapter
Kansas City Zoo Chapter
Elmwood Park Zoo Chapter
Greenville Zoo Chapter
High Forest Chapter
Pittsburgh Chapter
Lion Country Safari Chapter
Zoo New England Chapter
Omaha Chapter
Fresno Chaffee Zoo Chapter
Greater Cleveland Chapter
New York City Chapter

Simum Up to \$999



Thank You Chapters

Platinum \$2000 and Above

Wildlife World Zoo Chapter

Gold \$1000.00 - \$1999

Greater Cleveland Chapter

North Carolina Chapter

Omaha Chapter

Puget Sound Chapter

Detroit Chapter

Cape May County Zoo Chapter

Fort Worth AAZK Chapter

Silver \$500.00 - \$999

St. Louis Chapter

Lion Country Safari Chapter

Indianapolis Chapter

Toronto Zoo Chapter

Nashville Chapter

Greater Sacramento Chapter

Seneca Park Chapter

AAZK- Milwaukee Chapter

Elmwood Park Zoo Chapter

Little Rock Chapter

Galveston Chapter

Topeka Chapter

Delaware Valley University Chapter

Los Angeles Chapter

Staten Island Zoo Chapter

Chesapeake Chapter

Jacksonville Chapter

Roger Williams Park Chapter

Iowa Chapter

Oklahoma City Chapter

Dallas Chapter

Georgia Chapter

San Francisco Chapter

Albuquerque Chapter

Kansas City Zoo Chapter

Columbus Chapter

Lincoln Park Chapter

Akron Zoo Chapter

Memphis Zoo Chapter

Potawatomi Zoo Chapter

Phoenix Chapter

Rainier Chapter

Little Turtle Chapter

Bay Area Chapter

Greater Philadelphia Chapter

Greater Baltimore Chapter

El Paso Del Norte Chapter

Potter Park Zoo Chapter

Birmingham Chapter

Greater Cincinnati Chapter

Mesker Park Zoo Chapter

Ozarks Chapter

Southern Colorado Chapter

Badger Chapter

Tucson Chapter

Midnight Sun Chapter

Point Defiance Chapter

San Antonio Chapter

Portland Chapter

San Diego Chapter

Minnesota Zoo Chapter

Baton Rouge Zoo Chapter

Brookfield Chapter

Central Illinois Chapter

Connecticut Chapter

Zoo New England Chapter

New Orleans Chapter

Pittsburgh Chapter

Riverbanks Zoo and Garden Chapter

Rosamond Gifford Chapter

Bronze Up to \$499

Utah Chapter

Glass City Chapter

New York City Chapter

National Capital Chapter

Greater NJ Alliance Chapter

Tennessee Valley Chapter

Roanoke Valley Chapter

Battle Creek Chapter

Greenville Zoo Chapter

Santa Fe Chapter

North Carolina Piedmont Chapter

Brevard Chapter

Greater Houston Chapter

Scovill Zoo Chapter

JZ Keepers Chapter

Fresno Chaffee Chapter

Greater Kansas City Chapter

Hub City Chapter

Brandywine Chapter

California Desert Chapter

Redwood Coast Chapter

South Florida Chapter

Tulsa Chapter

Greater Orlando Chapter

RDC of the Buffs Chapter

Assiniboine Park Zoo Chapter

High Forest Chapter

Tidewater Chapter

Cosley Zoo Chapter

Rocky Mountain Chapter

Red River of Louisiana Chapter

Heart Of Illinois Chapter

Dakota Chapter

Quad City Chapter

Naples Chapter

Louisville Chapter

America's Teaching Chapter





Annual Contribution to AAZK

\$1000 or greater

AAZK Trees for You and Me Program Support \$250

Greater Cincinnati Chapter
Minnesota Chapter
Akron Chapter
Brookfield Chapter
Columbus Chapter
Dallas Zoo Chapter
San Francisco Zoo Chapter
Seneca Park Zoo Chapter
Southern Colorado Chapter

Conservation \$250

Potawatomi Zoo Chapter
Greater Kansas City Chapter
Los Angeles Chapter
Baton Rouge Zoo Chapter
Cape May County Zoo Chapter
Central Illinois Chapter
Connecticut Chapter
Greater NJ Alliance Chapter
JZ Keepers Chapter
Lincoln Park Chapter
Midnight Sun Chapter
Oklahoma City Chapter
South Florida Chapter
Birmingham Chapter
Nashville Chapter

International Outreach Committee \$250

Greater Cleveland Chapter
Portland Chapter
Elmwood Park Zoo Chapter
San Diego Chapter
El Paso Del Norte Chapter
San Antonio Chapter
Greater Orlando Chapter

Animal Welfare \$250

Greater Sacramento Chapter
Albuquerque Chapter
Battle Creek Chapter
Phoenix Chapter
Redwood Coast
Tulsa Chapter

AAZK Resource Committee \$250

Bay Area Chapter

Awards \$250

Greater Baltimore Chapter

Grants \$250

Galveston Chapter
Greater Houston Chapter

Communications/NZKW \$250

Pittsburgh Chapter

Diversity \$250

St. Louis Chapter
Badger Chapter
Brandywine Zoo Chapter
California Desert Chapter
Fort Worth Chapter
Georgia Chapter
Greater Philadelphia
Greenville Zoo Chapter
Kansas City Zoo Chapter
Memphis Zoo Chapter
Mesker Park Zoo Chapter
Zoo New England Chapter
New Orleans Chapter
New York City Chapter
North Carolina Chapter
Ozarks Chapter
Potter Park Zoo Chapter
Riverbanks Zoo and Garden Chapter

Topeka Chapter
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Chapter
Greater Cleveland Chapter

Safety \$250

Iowa Chapter
Rainier Chapter

Undefined Committee/ Program Support \$250

Port Defiance Chapter

**Thank you to the following individuals for
their generous contributions to AAZK's
programs and conservation efforts.**

Rose Bemo
Bethany Bingham
Jared Birnbaum
Skyler Bossons
Geoff Doiron
Ann Littlewood
Mike and Sue Lutz
Terry Lutz
Ryan McNamara
Angelina Mesa
Mary Jo Rednour
Jan Schroeder
Lyn Seiple
Mackenzie Turner
Charles Zaragoza
Marianna Zechman

Financials

Expenses

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Bowling for Rhinos | \$6,750 |
| Board & Management | \$30,351 |
| Conference | \$27,277 |
| Grants | \$26,289 |
| Business Management & Operations | \$126,187 |
| <i>Animal Keepers Forum</i> | \$70,890 |
| BFR Program Expenses | |
| - BFR Action for Cheetahs in Kenya | \$24,319 |
| - BFR International Rhino Foundation | \$136,798 |
| - BFR Lewa Wildlife Conservancy | \$147,693 |
| Total BFR Expense | \$308,810 |
| Technology | \$8,847 |
| Re-branding Project | \$36,720 |
| Investments | \$27,620 |
| Total | \$669,741 |

Income

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| BFR Income (all programs) | \$314,854 |
| National Conference | \$22,753 |
| Donations | \$19,751 |
| Job Board | \$5,591 |
| Membership | \$103,835 |
| Product Sales | \$413 |
| Recharter Fees & Duty Obligation | \$77,621 |
| Advertising | \$27,977 |
| Sponsorship | \$10,008 |
| Investments | \$68,460 |
| Total | \$651,263 |
| Net Income | \$-18,478 |

**1941
AAZK
Members**

\$250K

The amount AAZK Chapters donated to 198 worldwide conservation projects, emergency relief, or other charitable venture

**109
AAZK
Chapters**

AAZK invested in an organization-wide rebranding effort to introduce a new logo, new website and new merchandise

Membership

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Affiliate | 299 |
| Commercial Membership | 12 |
| Conservation Partner | 18 |
| Contributing | 10 |
| Emerging Nation | 4 |
| EN-Sponsored | 204 |
| Exchange | 21 |
| Institutional | 111 |
| International | 8 |
| International w/ AKF Print | 1 |
| Library | 2 |
| Lifetime Member | 26 |
| Professional | 1160 |
| Student | 65 |
| TOTAL | 1941 |



AAZK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nicole Pepo, President
North Carolina Zoo, Asheboro, NC

Joseph Nappi, Vice-Chair
Bronx Zoo/WCS, New York, NY

Paul Brandenburger
Baltimore Zoo, Baltimore, MD

Sara Bjerklie
Dallas Zoo, Dallas, TX

Russell Pharr,
Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium
Tacoma, WA

Erika Defer
Safari West, Santa Rosa, CA

Sarah Snider
Tulsa Zoo, Tulsa, OK

AAZK STAFF

Scott Soldat-Valenzuela
Executive Director, Phoenix, AZ

Jeffrey Soldat-Valenzuela
Director of Business Operations

Bethany Bingham
Director Professional Development &
Conference Management
Salt Lake City, UT

Shane Good, Editor-in-Chief
Animal Keepers' Forum, Valley City, OH

Elizabeth Tigue
Graphic Designer, Cleveland, OH

The mission of The American Association of Zoo Keepers is to advance excellence in the animal keeping profession, foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, support deserving conservation projects, and promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life.

